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Message Text

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41
ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-05 CU-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

SIL-01 AGR-05 /089 W
---------- 126120
R 100710Z JUL 75
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5301
INFO AMCONGEN ASMARA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECON
SUBJECT: RUMORS OF URBAN LAND REFORM ONCE AGAIN ON THE INCREASE

REF: ADDIS 6338 PARA 3

1. THERE HAS BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL RESURGENCE OF RUMORS ABOUT IMMINENT URBAN LAND REFORM WHICH HAS GIVEN RISE TO A SPATE OF ARTICLES IN BOTH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND VERNACULAR PRESS. THE GENERAL THRUST OF THE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS IN THAT URBAN LAND REFORM SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY BECAUSE "EXPLOITIVE LANDLORDISM MUST BE ELIMINATED" AND BECAUSE THE CURRENT SITUATION IS CREATING MAJOR CONFLICTS BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND TENANTS. IN AN APPARENT REACTION TO THIS SITUATION THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, LT.COL. FELLEKE TABOR, HELD A NEWS CONFERENCE JULY 7 ADMONISHING LAND OWNERS
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AND THE TENANTS TO "LIVE IN PEACE AND HARMONY" AND MADE IT CLEAR

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THAT BOTH SHOULD MEET THE RESPECTIVE OBLIGATIONS. HE ALSO
ADVISED THEM TO "AWAIT PATIENTLY FOR A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO
BE ISSUED/ ON THE QUESTION OF NATIONALIZATION.

2. AN ETHIOPIAN HERALD ARTICLE STATES THAT ACCORDING TO THE
MUNICIPALITY OF ADDIS THERE ARE ABOUT 216,000 REGISTERED
RESIDENTIAL HOUSES IN THE CAPITAL OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY
134,000 ARE BEING RENTED TO TENANTS. SOME OBSERVERS HAVE
SINCE USED THESE FIGURES AS EVIDENCE THAT "71 PERCENT OF
ADDIS ABABANS" ARE SUFFERING "UNDER THE CRUSHING HEELS OF
RAPACIOUS LANDLORDISM.

3. COMMENT: GIVEN THE STATE OF UNCERTAINTY OVER OWNERSHIP
OF URBAN PROPERTY AND THE RESULTING FRICTIONS THAT HAVE
DEVELOPED BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND TENANTS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL ALMOST
CERTAINLY HAVE TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. MANY,
IF NOT MOST, LANDLORDS IN ADDIS ARE LIVING IN HOUSES MUCH MORE
MODEST THAN THOSE THEY RENT OUT TO FOREIGNERS AND OTHER TENANTS.
AS THEY FEAR THAT SOME KIND OF URBAN NATIONALIZATION IS
INEVITABLE AND AS MOST ASSUME THAT NATIONALIZATION WILL PROVIDE
FOR A FAMILY TO RETAIN ONE HOUSE FOR ITS OWN USE, THEY NOW
WISH TO MOVE IN TO THE BEST HOUSE THEY OWN. ON THE OTHER HAND,
WE HAVE REPORTS THAT SOME TENANTS ARE NO LONGER PAYING THEIR
RENT AS THEY EXPECT TO OBTAIN THE HOUSE IN WHICH THEY LIVE
WHEN URBAN LAND REFORM IS ANNOUNCED. ALTHOUGH NOT DISCUSSED IN
ANY OF THESE ARTICLES, URBAN NATIONALIZATION WILL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD
ALSO AFFECT COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES SUCH AS OFFICE BUILDINGS. THE
EMBASSY HAS NO SOLID INFORMATION ON THIS POINT BUT IT APPEARS
THAT OWNERSHIP OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES IS HIGHLY CONCENTRATED
IN A FEW HANDS.

4. WE HAD EARLIER HEARD, AND REPORTED, THAT GOVERNMENT HAD
DECIDED TO POSTPONE FOR SOME MONTHS ANY ANNOUNCEMENT OF URBAN
NATIONALIZATIONS, BECAUSE THE DIRG DID NOT WANT TO ADD NEW
TENSIONS TO THE MANY ALREADY CREATED. HOWEVER THE PUBLIC STATE-
MENTS ARE NOW APPARENTLY PREPARING THE WAY FOR NATIONALIZATIONS
IN THE NEAR FUTURE, A STEP THAT MAY PLEASE MANY TENANTS BUT THAT
WILL FURTHER ALIENATE THE MIDDLE CLASS, INCLUDING MANY MILITARY
AND CIVIL SERVICE LANDOWNERS.
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